

LDS dedicate birthplace of Relief Society

Deseret News special

3-11-82

NAUVOO, Ill. — The birthplace of the Relief Society of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints 140 years ago — now a newly restored home on the banks of the Mississippi River — was dedicated Thursday in special ceremonies.

The tidy Sarah M. Kimball home, where the Relief Society was formed in the spring of 1842, is one of 18 historic buildings restored by the church in Nauvoo.

Dean L. Larsen, a member of the presidency of the church's First Quorum of the Seventy, presided at the services and offered the dedicatory prayer. Although snow blanketed the ground, the day was mild and sunny for the hundreds who attended the dedication.

Barbara Smith, general president of the Relief Society, conducted the session and told

of the society's history and growth. The first meeting in the Kimball home involved 18 women, but the Relief Society now has more than 1.6 million members.

"It was organized for the express purpose of making the ministering to the poor more effective," she said, but has come to provide a wide variety of compassionate service and education.

"Today some of our most important work is the teaching and training that goes on in our weekly meetings and the dedicated labor of our sisters," Mrs. Smith said.

"This organization offers relief from spiritual and intellectual ignorance, relief from poverty and suffering, relief from sorrow and loneliness, relief from all the evils of the world, relief from cynicism and doubt," she said.

Women still suffer from much that is degrading in many nations, and the problems of discrimination are not gone from the American scene: but by the light of the gospel, "we will overcome all the inequities that prevent women from enjoying the fullness of their mortal lives," Mrs. Smith said.

The great challenge for the Relief Society is to provide strong homes and loving care for children in those homes, she said. "It really is not now and never has been a question of either a rich and full life for women or a strong and loving home. Relief Society must meet the challenge of both positions."

Marian R. Boyer and Shirley W. Thomas, counselors in the Relief Society's general presidency, also participated in the dedicatory program.

Mrs. Boyer described in detail some of the

life and circumstances of Sarah M. Kimball, who remained a leader in the Relief Society organization all her life.

Sarah Kimball and others met in her home in 1842 to discuss the possibility of organizing a "ladies' relief society" and the idea was presented to Joseph Smith, the prophet leader of the church. He formally organized the Relief Society March 17, 1842.

A 36-voice women's chorus from the St. Louis, Mo., area sang a number of the songs sung at the original Relief Society meeting. The dedication was followed by other activities in the nearby LDS Visitors Center and in the Nauvoo Ward.

The dedication was part of an overall tribute to women during March by the Relief Society, Young Women and Primary organizations of the LDS Church.



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